

Master's candidate a former military interrogator

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Military Intelligence wasn't a cloak and dagger affair for Jim Sack. He was merely a "Befrager", or friendly interrogator of communist defectors, for the 66th Military Intelligence (MI) battalion in Munich, Germany from 1971 to 1973.

Sack served as one of the information-gathering tentacles of U.S. intelligence, which roughly 20 years earlier also included an I.U. professor who worked as a CIA information analyst.

Sack, now a master's candidate at I.U., said, "I made reports on everything from the price of butter in Romania to production rates of the non-ferrous metal industry in Poland and its paramilitary operations."

Sack was part of an MI operation of 30 to 40 interrogators, housed in a three-story German apartment building, who questioned people leaving European Communist countries. Though the information he obtained was seldom of a military nature, it described economic and social situations that were important to U.S. military planning and spy training.

"We interrogated anyone from Romania who looked like he had a story to tell," he said. The interrogations were not coercive, "no rubber hoses or anything like that."

Sack questioned 10 to 15 persons during his three years in Munich. Most were laborers, but a few, such as a top executive of the Romanian oil industry, had held important posts.

Defectors went both ways through the Iron Curtain. And many of these were criminals or social misfits, Sack said.

"One of our standard fill-in-the-blank questions was 'Why did you cross?' Their reasons often were political or economic, plus the fact that they had committed some crime." Such criminals usually were sent back to the country they came from, Sack said.

The intelligence reports that Sack and his fellow interrogators made were put in envelopes and sent to Building No. 1 in Munich, where they were distributed to Allied intelligence agencies.

Reports always went to the CIA, which was known as "DAD" to MI personnel in Munich, Sack recalled.

But the interrogation was far from secret, he said. A Czechoslovakian and Hungarian television crew once filmed a documentary about the interrogations that Sack and his colleagues conducted on defectors.

"The East Germans knew what we did, and we knew what they did. We both knew it was a waste of time," Sack said.

Reports like those prepared by Sack were analyzed by government intelligence specialists such as Robert F. Byrnes, now, a distinguished professor at I.U. Byrnes worked for the CIA in the Office of National Estimates from 1951 to 54, reporting directly to the CIA director.

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